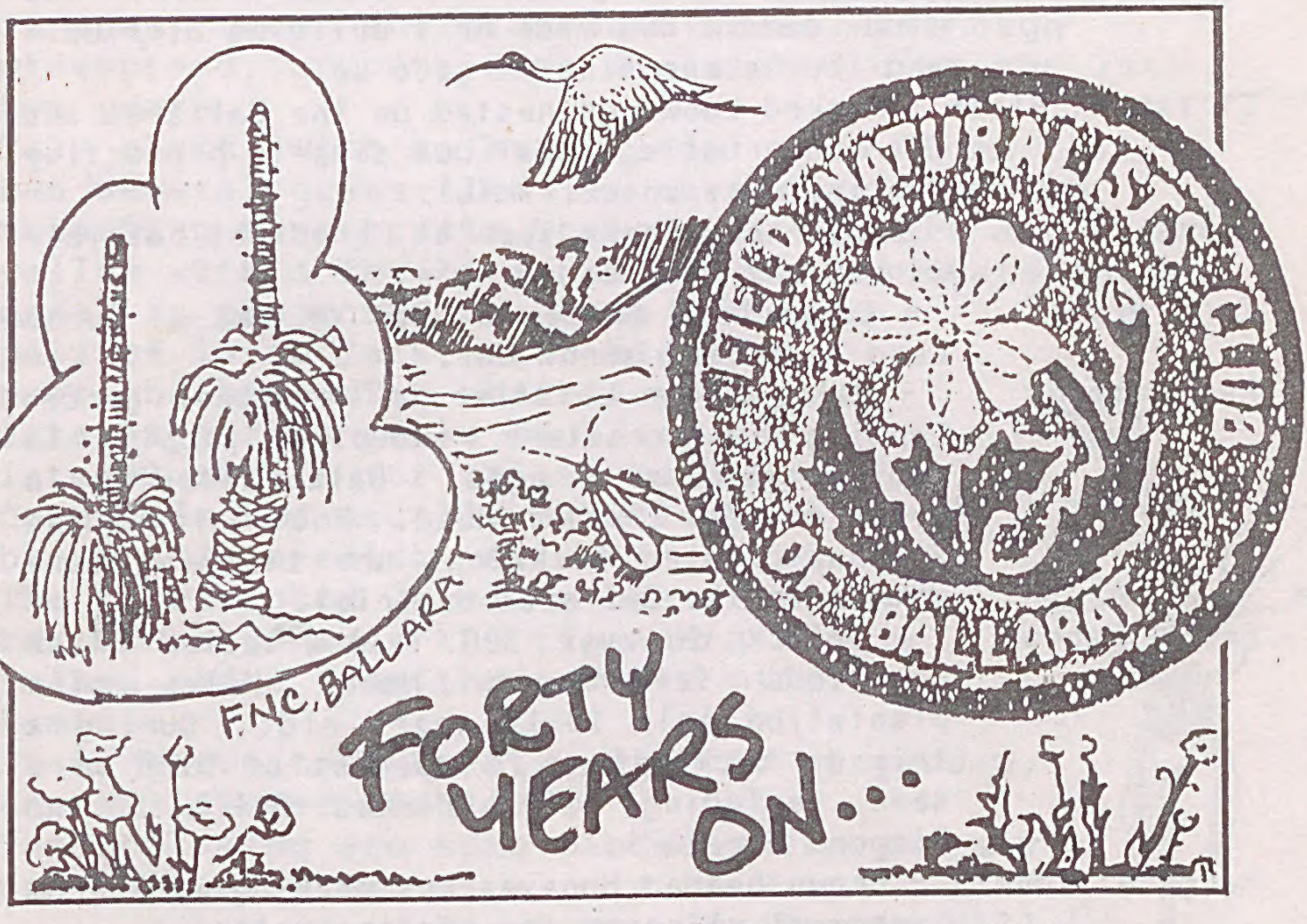
Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Incorporated.

NOVEMBER 1992

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting	November 6	40th Anniversary Dinner Webbcona Bowling Club, Wendouree
Meeting	December 4	Use of Hi-Tech Equipment in Plant Identification. J.Jelbart
Excursion	November 8	Campbelltown Area. F.Harrap
Excursion	November 20-22	Club Campout. Barramunga in The Otway Ranges



President: Dr. K. McDonnell Ph.053 326800
Secretary: Mr. J. Gregurke 394993
Treasurer: Mrs. F. Williamson 327631
Editor: Mr. L. Fink 052 861319

Meetings as specified are held at the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street Sth., Art Building, commencing at 7.30 p.m. EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, cnr. STURT AND ARMSTRONG STS., BALLARAT, at 9.30 a.m. for FULL DAY OUTINGS OR AT 1.30 p.m. for HALF DAY.

Field Reports: September Meeting

Pat Murphy - Bushy Club Moss (Lycopodium deuterodensum) found in Wombat Forest. Plants were not as tall as those previously seen at Smythesdale.

Greg Binns - Pair of Peregrine Falcons sitting on nest at Piggoreet. At Dereel Peregrine Falcons have 3 chicks about 5 days old. Little Eagle seen at Dereel where Nodding Greenhoods are flowering profusely.

Florence Williamson - Pair of Little Ravens began building at nest in a Stringybark at Ballarat North. They were calling softly to each other. The windy conditions made nest building difficult and the Ravens finally gave up.

Elizabeth Stayt - Masked Lapwings nested on the Ballarat and Clarendon College oval but despite protective fencing were unsuccessful.

Lyndsay Fink - Copperhead Snake seen at Meredith; possibly washed out of flooded hole.

Tony Dyson - Copperhead Snake on edge of dam at Durham Lead on recent sunny day.

Ken Hammond - Male Golden Whistler in Wendouree garden. Lapwing in cemetery swooping people to protect nest of 4 eggs. Galahs feeding in grass at edge of Main Road. Both Galalhs and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are becoming more common in the Ballarat district.

Frank Harrap - Flock of over 300 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos feeding in Mount Helen pine plantation only 10-12 years old. During a trip to Mucklesford 70 species of bird were seen including male Crested Bellbird and Diamond Firetail.

Margaret Tonkin - Brown-headed Honeyeaters pecking wool from lambswool slippers for nesting material.

John Gregurke - Little Raven seen taking the last of 3 New Holland Honeyeater chicks from nest in Wendouree. Watching the futile attack of the parent birds was a magpie.

Ken McDonnell - Black Duck seen on roadside in pine forest at Creswick.

ORCHIDS OF THE BALLARAT DISTRICT

No. 4 of a series

Diuris sulphurea Tiger Orchid or Hornets

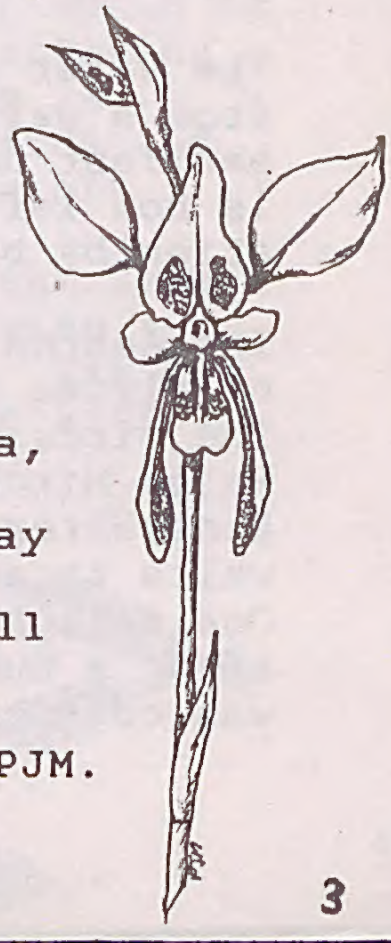
Diuris means "two-tailed"
Greek: dis = double, oura = a tail,
in reference to the lateral sepals

Flowering time is mostly October to November.

The Tiger Orchid occurs singly or in small colonies in open forest and grassland areas. Although widespread, numbers have diminished over the last ten years.
This plant, with an erect stem up to 70cms tall, has several grass-like leaves and usually two sheathing stem bracts.The pretty flowers are sulphur yellow with a few brown markings. The ovate dorsal sepal is projected forwards with a pair of large dark brown blotches near the base. The stalked yellow lateral petals curve back and the lateral sepals (or tails) hanging downwards and usually parallel,are brown and greenish yellow in colour. The three-lobed labellum has a cross bar of brown near the tip and a single raised ridge from the base to middle of lamina.
It is known to hybridize with D. corymbosa, the Wallflower Orchid.
The following are some places where you may see this orchid:-

Berringa	Dreamer's Hill
Creswick	Haddon
Rokewood	Mt. Beckwith

PJM.



EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY - Mr Ian Ashton

The Eyre Bird Observatory is situated in a flora and fauna reserve near Cocklebiddy on the Eyre Highway, 1200 km east of Perth, W.A.

The observatory is housed in the old Eyre Telegraph Station which was built in 1887 at a site discovered by the explorer Edward John Eyre in 1870. The telegraph station was abandoned in 1929 and then purchased by the RAOU in 1976 for conversion into the bird observatory.

The observatory is financially self-supporting, obtaining some income from meteorological observations that are sent to Perth and from conducting courses in the natural history of the area. Ian Ashton has recently returned to Ballarat after two years as warden of the observatory.

Cocklebiddy is on the Nullabor Plain, in an area regularly visited by spieleologists for its long underwater dives. Here visitors leave their cars and are taken by 4WD vehicles down the escarpment and sand track across mallee and grass plains to the observatory.

The water supply for the observatory is taken from a well sunk amongst the sand dunes in the earliest days of the telegraph station. Water is now left out in pools to encourage habitation by birds.

Ian Ashton presented an interesting sequence of slides taken during his period as warden. The birds that frequently visit the area include Major Mitchell cockatoo, eleven species of honeyeater, red wattlebird, bush bronzewing, white faced heron, goshawk, and mulga parrot. One delightful slide showed a chick, which after a number of attempts from the audience, was correctly identified as a bustard.

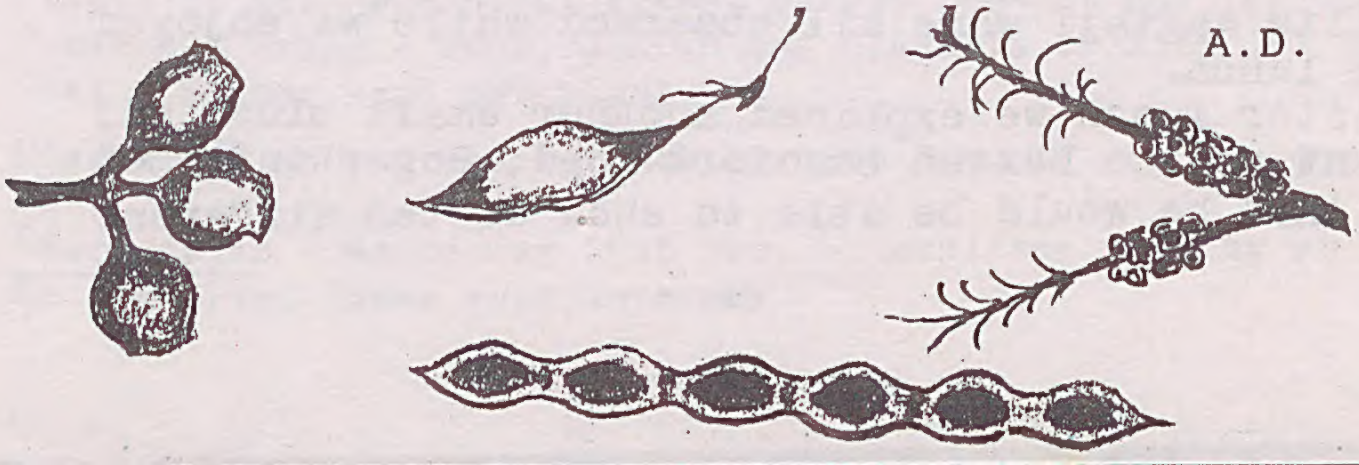
The observatory now runs a variety of nature courses open to visitors who provide some funds and volunteer labour for tasks such as planting marram grass to stabilise nearby sand dunes, which if not done would eventually engulf the observatory buildings. The courses that were illustrated by slides included botany, showing mallee, tea tree and orchids ; whales, showing the southern right whale which comes every three years to breed near Twilight Cove, 30 km west of the observatory ; bat banding, showing the chocolate wattle bat and other birds including mallee fowl, kestrel and sea eagle ; reptiles, showing sand goanna, Goulds goanna and wood gheko ; butterflies and moths showing approx. 12 species including a large moth weighing up to 12.5 gm.; bird banding, showing banded boobook owl in a cave, white browed scrub wren, fan-tailed cuckoo and pied honeyeater.

The littoral zone near the observatory is frequented by sea birds including pelican, cormorant, laughing gull, pacific gull, herons, terns and emus on the dunes.

The area is not immune to the growing threat from feral species. A six-man team at Eucla on the WA/SA border is fully employed destroying starlings attempting to invade WA from SA ; foxes, dogs and cats plunder wading birds and other natural species near the observatory.

The talk showed what a valuable role the Eyre Bird Observatory is playing in conserving a remote but important natural habitat. Visits can be arranged through the RAOU (Greg Binns).

A.D.



Lexton Excursion

Club members enjoyed a mild spring day for the September excursion to the Lexton area, lead by Roger Thomas we travelled to the Caralulup State Forest a small bush remnant a few kilometers nor th of Lexton township.

Green and gold were the predominant colours as we entered the bush, Golden, Hedge and Goldust Wa ttle were in evidence throughout the area, one of the first birds seen was the Blackfaced Cuckoo Sh rike, a Grey Thrush was calling strongly and a Wee bill was foraging busily in the foliageof a Grey-Box, on the forest floor numerous wildflowers were examined by our group, Yellow Stars, Early Nancy, Hovea, Dwarf Greenhood and Climbing Sundew were just a few of the plants to be seen, some members adopted some rather strange positions in their en deavour to enjoy the fragrance of the Scented Sun-dew, a family of Choughs were creating quite a dis turbance, as we approached them we saw the reason for their annoyance, they were in the process of building their distinctive mud nest, most Choughs nests that I have observed are usually on a horiz-ontal bough, this one was constructed at the base of three upright branches, one of our members ask ed Roger if he knew if Koalas were to be found in this area, to which he replied that he had not s seen any on his previous visits. a few moments la ter, to our surprise, and delight, one was spotted in the canopy of a Brown Stringybark, by the size of the animal it was a male most probably, all ag reed that it was one of the largest Koalas that t they had seen.

Our lunch break was taken at the Lexton Stream-side Reserve, the bushlife here was quite prolific Brown Treecreeper, Crimson Rosella, Red Rumped Parrot, Yellow Robin White Plumed Honeyeater and Willie Wagtail were all observed while we enjoyed our lunch.

After lunch we explored another small block adj acent to the Lexton Beaufort Road, Roger informed us that he would be able to show us ten different

Eucalypts in a very small area of bush, birds and flowers were not quite as plentiful here, Pink Bells, Correa, Narrow Leaf Bitter Pea were some of the plants flowering, Scarlet Robin, White Naped Honey Eater, Kookaburra and Australian Raven were some of the birds observed, thanks were expressed by Roger for a lovely day out

K.H.

Plant List.
Yellow Star, Climbing Sundew, Scented Sundew, Pink bells, Honey Pots, Yam Daisy, Dwarf Greenhood, Nodding Greenhood Gorse Bitter Pea, Peach Heath, Fringe Myrtle, Austral Bears Ears and the Eucalypt are **Yellow Box**, **Grey Box**, **Red** Box, Long-leaf Box, Messmate, Brown Stringu Bark, Red Stringy Bark, Yellow Gum, Red Gum, Candle-bark.

Bird List.
Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo. Speckled Warbler, Blue Wren, White Browed Scrub Wren, Striated Pardalope, Red Browed Finch, Brown Goshawk, Little Eagle, Wedge Tailed Eagle, Wood Duck, and Sulphur Crested Cockatoo.

Barramunga Club Campout, November 20-22

Barramunga is Colac High School's camp. It is 50 km south of Colac, 5 km south of Forest on the Apollo Bay road at the junction of Upper Gellibrand road. To fully enjoy the camp arrive Friday evening. Activities during the weekend include visits to Stephenson Falls, West Barwon Lookout and the Otway Forests. Bring - FOOD, PILLOWS and BLANKETS or SLEEPING BAG. Cost - $4 per head per night.

Please let John Gregurke know, by 13th Nov. if you are coming.

Diary dates - Wednesday 25th Nov. - Committee meeting at Mc Donnells, Dawes road, Invermay.

Australian Native Mammals.

Cotd from last month:- The young are weaned ar a about sixty to seventy days old survival of each individual depends upon possession of territory. Some big adults have nearly seven ha. before europeans the aboriginal fires provided the mosaic needed for survival, however clearing for agriculture is detrimental to the species also the infrequent firing of habitat and now has a reduced and patchy range of habitat.
They are common in some parts of their range but they may have gone from the Ballarat area now.
There are four sub species.

Long Nosed Bandicoot Peremeles nasuta.
The natural home of these animals range from rainforests through wet woodlands to dry woodlands to areas with little ground cover.
They are better known for the conical holes in lawns on the outskirts of suburbia, between bouts of digging it moves about sniffing and while foraging, utters shrill grunt like squeaks.
They spend daylight in nests, usually a hollow scraped in the ground and lined with grass, the upper surface of the nest is partly covered with soil and may be hidden under debris. Females start to breed at about five months of age before they are fully grown. Therethere are eight nipples and usually two to three sometimes up to five are born after a gestation period of twelve days.
The pouch opens backwards the young remaining attached to the placenta until they have secured themselves to a nipple, they grow rapidly, hair emerges on the body at about forty days eyes are openin another five to ten days and weaning occurs at about sixty days after birth, when they reach fifty days the mother may mate againand produce a litter several days after the first is weaned.
They are common animals and widespread and should still be in the Ballarat area.
There are three sub species.

Elfin.